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[REDACTED] NRO 25X1A

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24 SEP 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR : Deputy Director (Science and Technology)

SUBJECT : Proposal to Commence Preliminary Studies for a New System X

REFERENCE : a. Memo for DD/S&T from AD/OEL, Dated 16 September 1963; Subject: "Airborne Electronic 25X1X4 Collection Program Against the [REDACTED]" 25X1X4 [REDACTED] NRO 25X1A

25X1X4 b. Memo for USIB from Acting Executive Secretary, Dated 20 September 1963; Subject: "Requirement for [REDACTED] to Obtain Intelligence on the [REDACTED]" 25X1X4 [REDACTED] NRO 25X1A

1. While I do not ordinarily like to differ with COMOR recommendations and OEL proposals in support thereof, I believe that I would be less than honest if I did not indicate to you those major reservations which impel me to withhold my concurrence to Reference a., which is responsive to Reference b., despite the difference in their dates.

2. By way of background, you will recall that OSA was a firm advocate of the design and installation of System X in the U-2 aircraft. In the closing months of FY 1963 in advance of program approval, OSA funded the work conducted by HRB-Singer, Inc. and Lockheed Aircraft Corporation to progress System X toward eventual installation in the U-2. We undertook this funding with the expectation that the engineering work it covered would be applicable to other aircraft systems such as the RB-57F, if that were decided upon as the more appropriate vehicle on political grounds for this collection.

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3. In mid-May of 1962, with the approval of Mr. McCone in his role as Chairman of USIB, OSA undertook to persuade [REDACTED] to sponsor a U-2, System X reconnaissance [REDACTED] under apparent

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In order to keep HRB-Singer and LAC alive on work leading toward System X in the U-2, additional funding in modest amounts was provided by reprogramming dollars within the OSA budget during the early months of FY 1964 in anticipation of the confrontation early in September.

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4. Meanwhile the Air Force began a concerted effort to adapt System X to an improved version of the RB-57D, which was then scheduled for modification by Convair early in the Fall of 1962. Dr. Charyk appeared at a USIB meeting in late August of 1962, pleading the case for using the so-called RB-57F rather than the U-2 for this mission. He cited some very impressive performance figures for this aircraft, as well as some (as it has turned out) incredibly short lead times for its operational readiness date. Nevertheless, USIB voted to abandon efforts to conduct this reconnaissance with the U-2 and System X at the USIB meeting to which I have referred, and a combined team of Air Force officers

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In doing so, they credited the RB-57F with performance figures all of us knew would never be achieved; i. e., 78,000 feet altitude (as against 68,000 feet actual), remarkable on-station endurance, and operational readiness in ten months. [REDACTED] had no choice but to agree gracefully to cease any effort to promote the cause of the U-2.

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5. Coincident with the emphasis upon the RB-57F, OSA surrendered contractual responsibility for System X to USAF. Despite their anticipations of a year ago, the RB-57F is not ready to deploy; however, a check with the Chief, NE Division, reveals that the Air Force still has a valid invitation from [REDACTED] to deploy the present version of System X in the RB-57F

as soon as it is operationally ready. This outstanding approval was Phase Three of the program negotiated with [REDACTED] following the withdrawal of [REDACTED] from the U-2 System X picture. Phases One and Two were compressed by USAF, and an RB-57 aircraft, together with some fairly simple ELINT for training purposes, was deployed to [REDACTED] in 1962. When the RB-57F is deployed, it will be targeted against [REDACTED] but presumably from a point within the confines [REDACTED] Despite its limited performance capabilities compared to those predicted for it, the RB-57F and System X as they now exist do represent the best present technical capability

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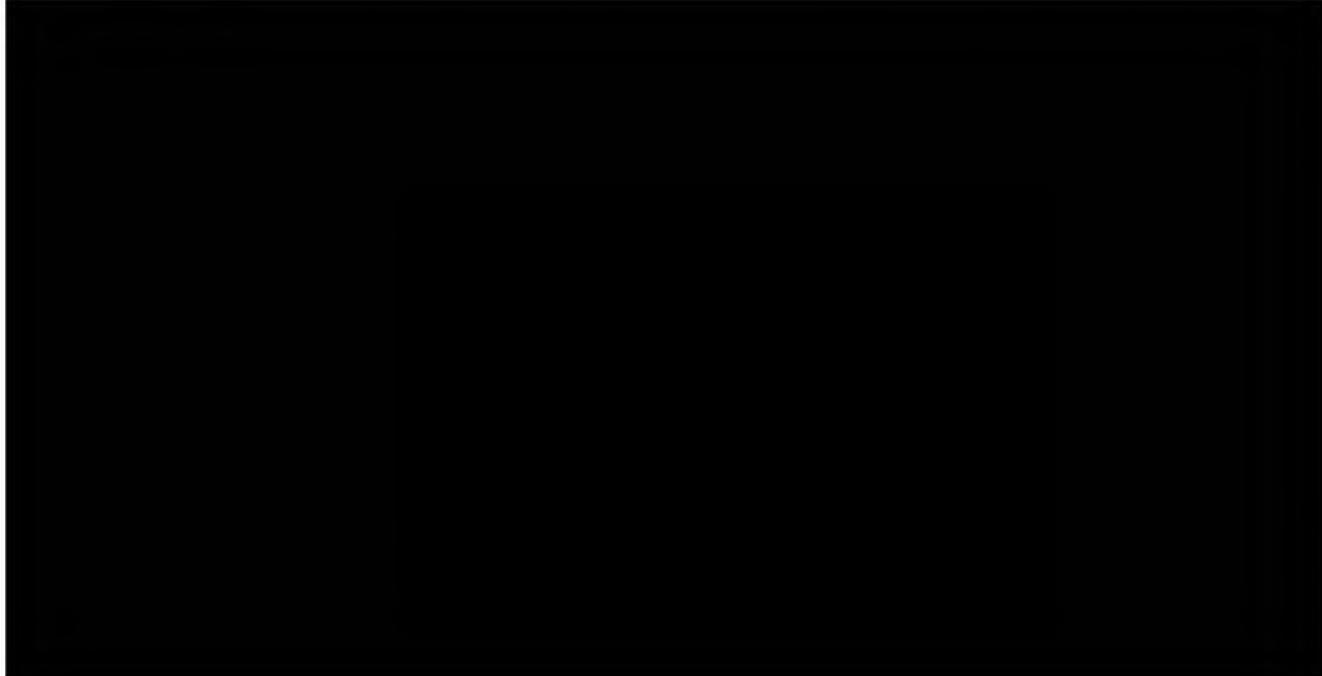
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for collection against [REDACTED] I believe that until we give USAF a chance to implement Phase Three and to evaluate results obtained, it would be premature to duplicate the effort they have expended with System X.

6. I feel that for us to proceed with engineering of a smaller System X to fit the U-2 ignores the real-time political problem of where such an aircraft would be based in order to conduct its mission. Certainly we would 25X1A6a find it difficult to obtain approval for deploying a System X U-2 [REDACTED] at a time when the RB-57F was operating there with essentially the same equipment. The Air Force has host government approval to introduce the RB-57F, while we have little or no prospect of being able to achieve the same concurrence [REDACTED] in the present political climate, even without con- 25X1A6a sidering the relative political unattractiveness [REDACTED] of the U-2 aircraft. In fact, it is modestly surprising that USAF has managed to keep its political approval for the RB-57F in the face of the demarache existing between [REDACTED] and this country.

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when thusly configured. Lockheed developed a prototype antenna for the U-2 System X configuration in mid-1962. It was machined up but never test flown because of the transfer of the mission to the Air Force.

8. In summary, I question the wisdom of expending \$150,000 at this moment in time on equipment which we may never be able to use if successfully developed and which is essentially competitive with the RB-57F program approved by the Chairman of USIB and still actively supported by USAF. Parenthetically it should be noted that with the current shortage of U-2's in the U. S. inventory and the assignment of CIA's share of these aircraft to requirements already in being, I question whether USAF would willingly relinquish two more SAC U-2's to the System X mission. It would require a minimum of two such aircraft to support the projected collection effort, as well as an augmented number of U-2 pilots by virtue of the requirement for almost continual alert status against foreshortened advance tip-off signal. I have the distinct feeling that for us to proceed to develop a competing System X for the U-2 would be interpreted by the D/NRO and USAF as being but another evidence of lack of faith on our part in the machinery of the National Reconnaissance Program. Since the antenna portion of the proposal would fall to the Skunkworks at Lockheed, this would also be another dilution of their current effort to make the OXCART operational at the earliest moment. These then are the many considerations which lead me to withhold my concurrence from [redacted] proposal in Reference a.

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(Signed) Jack C. Ledford

JACK C. LEDFORD
Colonel, USAF
Assistant Director
(Special Activities)

CC: AD/OEL

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